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Studies for natives

by Gary Gee

"With only 80 students on a campus of over 20,000 it's difficult to find the people interested in our activities," says Ed Metatawabin, new university advisor on Native Affairs.

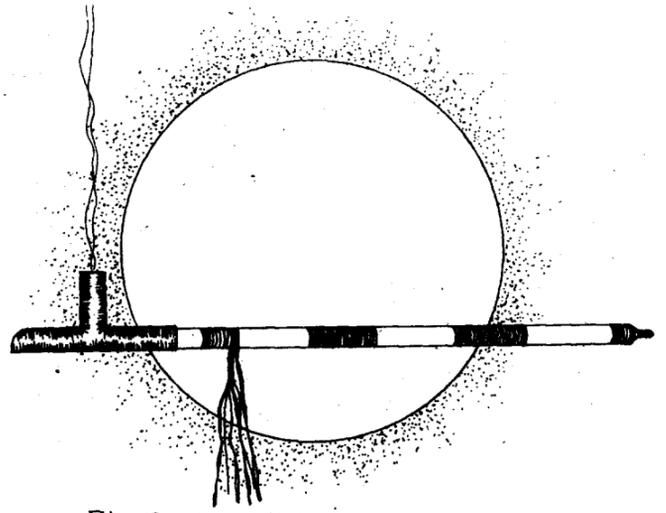
Nevertheless, Metatawabin and his staff of four workers have been busily travelling to native communities throughout the province. Their travels include discussions with prospective students and native people about community services and educational opportunities at the U of A.

While native enrollment has increased by 20 students this year, there is little room for optimism, says Metatawabin. He says the increase may be due to opposition last year to tuition increases for Metis students. The Students' Union supported Native Affairs in its protest against the tuition hikes.

Metatawabin's major concern is that native communities are becoming less interested in the university because the U of A still does not have a native studies program.

Native studies is a heated issue which has been discussed on campus for several years. In 1973 a Senate Task Force began investigating the need for a native studies program here. Marilyn Buffalo McDonald, former Native Affairs advisor, established a committee in 1975 to study the feasibility of such a program.

Metatawabin says while other universities in Canada have instituted native-oriented programs, this university has been very slow to respond. Such



a program would be strictly an academic offering, not a cultural one, he stresses. Open to all students, the program would study the history, psychology, politics and philosophy of the native peoples in Canada.

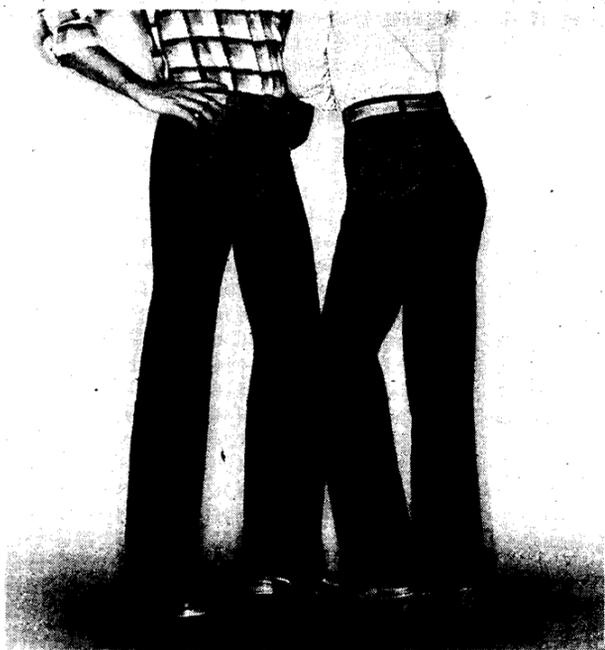
At present, the office of Native Affairs is lobbying various university groups for support for a Department of Native Studies within an existing faculty. Metatawabin says he hopes this native studies program would ultimately be included as a permanent academic offering with degree courses.

Aside from the native studies program, Metatawabin wants to increase the profile of

the office of Native Affairs on campus. While the office acts as a liaison between the native community and the U of A, it also assists native students at the university.

Native Affairs provides an orientation program for first-year students and assistance in registration and course selection. It also supplies academic and personal counselling throughout the year and aids in finding employment and in financial difficulties.

Metatawabin says he hopes Native Awareness Week in mid-March will increase the awareness and interaction of other students with the office and with native students.



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